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Hostage terror

Buckley's execution claimed by terrorists

By Lorrie Lynch
and Leslie Phillips
USA TODAY

Moslem terrorists, in a statement to Lebanese newspaper *An Nahar* today, announced the execution of U.S. Embassy official William Buckley, held hostage for 562 days, as a spy.

There was no official confirmation of the death. wording of the statement made it unclear whether the execution had actually taken place.

"We declare a revenge for the blood of the martyrs, by announcing the execution of the death sentence for the American CIA agent... after publishing this statement."

Islamic Jihad said Buckley's death avenged Israel's attack on PLO headquarters in Tunisia Tuesday that killed 60. Jihad released a photo of him.

If reports prove true, Buckley, 57 — held longest of the six — would be the first of the USA hostages known to have been killed. Unlike the others, there have been no reports of his condition while held.

His death, the same week a Soviet hostage was killed, would mark an ominous escalation in terrorism in the region. The Soviet diplomat — one of four kidnapped by another Moslem group Monday — was found Wednesday.

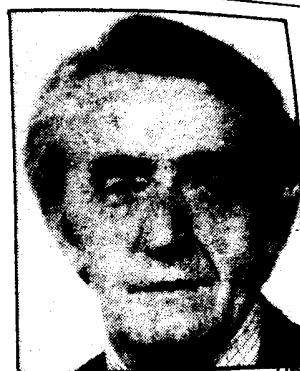
Pat Weir — whose brother-in-law the Rev. Benjamin Weir was held 16 months before his release Sept. 14 — said: "I just shivered when I heard Reagan say the bombing of Tunisia ... had some justification.... Maybe Mr. Buckley lost his life because of it."

No reports of Buckley in 562 days

William Buckley, 57, is the least known of the "forgotten six."

During his 562 days of captivity, there have been no reports about his condition — unlike some of the other six hostages, who have been seen and have sent letters.

Born in Medford, Mass., Buckley is unmarried. He was a building contractor and librarian before taking an Army civilian job in



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BUCKLEY: Reports say he was executed.

1965. He arrived in Beirut — his first State Department post — in Sept. 1983.

— Lorrie Lynch